

Pointers For Parents

Poison Prevention Week Helps Keep Kids Safe

(NAPS)—More than one million children were exposed to potentially poisonous substances last year. To help keep children safe from poison, the organizers of Poison Prevention Week are taking their awareness message into the classroom.

The number of ingestions or exposures to household medicines and chemicals in the United States has been high among children for decades. In 1961, that danger prompted President John F. Kennedy to designate the third week in March as “National Poison Prevention Week.” During this week, the National Poison Control Council and local communities work together to educate young people about poison safety.

Through hands-on activities and unique instructional materials, teachers challenge students during Poison Prevention Week to incorporate the information they learn in the classroom into their daily lives.

A popular teaching tool behind poison prevention is issue No. 2 of BioSTARS. This issue, titled “Is it a poison?”, is a curriculum supplement that helps teachers engage students in science concepts related to poisons and household chemicals.

“My students enjoy using BioSTARS handouts and participating in science activities. And these materials help me fulfill specific state education guidelines,” said Robin Lewis, a seventh grade Life Science teacher at Northwood Middle School in Smyth County, Virginia. “For example, this year my students built science projects based on the ones listed in the ‘Get Real’ section of BioSTARS. The science experiments allowed us to fulfill the *Standards of Learning* requirements mandated by the state of Virginia.”

The BioSTARS supplements present students with real-life stories that highlight the importance of



Robin Lewis (center), a seventh grade Life Science teacher at Northwood Middle School in Smyth County, Virginia.

safely using the chemicals found in medicines and household products. The materials offer hands-on labs, Web-based research, and background information on science-related careers.

“BioSTARS is a valuable tool in teaching poison prevention to elementary students,” said Josephine Darwin, developmental director and outreach director of the Middle Tennessee Poison Center. “This year alone we have used the BioSTARS handouts to teach poison prevention to between 400 and 600 third- and fourth-grade students. The students love the magazine format and really respond to the interactive activities.”

BioSTARS also is available in Spanish, serving as an instructional tool for bilingual teachers and Spanish immersion programs.

BioSTARS is distributed free-of-charge to teachers by Join Hands, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting awareness and understanding of biological research. BioSTARS supports the National Science Education Standards (1996).

For more information, contact the Join Hands Educational Foundation at 1-800-933-8228 or visit online at www.joinhand.org.